

## CLAIMS

1) A process for manufacturing a cold water soluble black leaf tea comprising the steps of

- 5                   (a) optionally withering freshly plucked tea leaf,  
                  (b) macerating the leaves,  
                  (c) allowing the leaves to ferment,  
                  (d) firing the leaves to arrest fermentation and  
                  (e) then drying them to yield black leaf tea,

10   the process being characterised in that the tea leaves are treated before fermentation or before mid-fermentation with a pH lowering agent, followed by treatment during fermentation with ascorbic acid, salts of ascorbic acid or mixtures thereof at mid-fermentation or later in an amount that is sufficient for the black leaf tea to be infusible in water at 5 to 100 °C.

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2) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid, salts of citric acid, malic acid, salts of malic acid or mixtures thereof.

3) A process as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the tea leaves are treated  
20   with the pH lowering agent during maceration or at the beginning of fermentation

4) A process as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid added in an amount of 0.05 to 5% by weight of the tea.

5) A process as claimed in any one of claim 1 to 3 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid added in an amount 0.1 to 4% by weight of the tea.

5 6) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid added in an amount of 0.1 to 3% by weight of the tea.

7) A process as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the pH lowering agent is added in the form of a solution in a single or split doses.

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8) A process as claimed in claim 7 wherein the solution is an aqueous solution.

9) A process as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the ascorbic acid is added in an amount of 0.1 to 10% by weight of the tea.

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10) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein the ascorbic acid is added in an amount 0.1 to 8% by weight of the tea.

11) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein the ascorbic acid is added in an amount of 0.1 to 5% by weight of the tea.

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12) A process as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the ascorbic is added in the form of a solution in a single or split doses.

13) A process as claimed in claim 12 wherein the solution is an aqueous solution.

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14) A process as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the fermentation lasts for 10 minutes to 3 hours at a temperature in the range 10 to 60°C

15) A process as claimed in claim 1 comprising the steps of

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a) macerating green tea leaves after optionally withering the tea leaves

b) processing the macerated tea leaves in a conventional manner to obtain black tea, wherein the green tea is treated first with 0.1 to 5% by weight of the tea of the pH-lowering agent in single or split doses at any time up to and including the beginning of fermentation, followed by treatment with 0.1 to 10% by weight of the tea of ascorbic acid, salts of ascorbic acid or mixtures thereof in single or split doses from mid-fermentation or later

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c) further processing the tea in a conventional manner to obtain black tea.

16) A process as claimed in claim 15 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid, salts of citric acid or mixtures thereof

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- 17) A process as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the resulting black tea leaf is heated with microwaves prior to infusion